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Busby Run Battlefield Park

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Pennsylvania Historical and
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Busby Run Battlefield Park
on the Pennsylvania Trail

Flour Bag Fort Monument

*Scene of Decisive Victory over the Indians,
August 5-6, 1763*

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THE PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL
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Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

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COLONEL Henry Bouquet's decisive victory over the Indians on August 5-6, 1763, took place at Bushy Run Battlefield, north of Jeannette and near Harrison City in Westmoreland County. The site of this battle, which halted the hitherto unchecked series of Indian attacks on British posts and frontier settlements in the Pontiac War and led eventually to the opening of western Pennsylvania to settlement, is now a State historic park administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

French power in America had collapsed after the British capture of Fort Duquesne in 1758, of Fort Niagara and Quebec in 1759, and Montreal in 1760; but the Indians became increasingly resentful of British domination. Claiming that the British had said they came to the western country only to drive out the French, Great Lakes Indians led by the Ottawa chief Pontiac besieged Detroit in May, 1763. Detroit held firm, but the so-called Pontiac War spread, as other tribes determined to end white settlement in the west.

Along the Pennsylvania frontier from Cumberland County to Northampton County, settlers fled their farms as Indian raids increased. By the last days of May, the Indians had cut off all communication with Fort Pitt, and defeat followed defeat. When June drew to a close, Forts Venango (Franklin), Le Boeuf (Waterford), and Presque Isle (Erie) had fallen to the Indians, and only Forts Pitt, Ligonier, and Bedford held out.

In order to reopen communication with the west, Sir Jeffery Amherst, the British commander in



Plan of the Battle near Bushy Run, by Thomas Hutchins. The hollow oval (7) represents the "Flourbag fort" where the wounded were protected; the other ovals (5, 6) were the cattle and horses; and the rectangles mark the positions of the troops. X marks the spot from which the Indians attacked.

chief, ordered Colonel Henry Bouquet to gather up all the available troops and go to the rescue of Fort Pitt. As the second in command under General Forbes in the expedition which captured French Fort Duquesne in 1758, Bouquet had much experience in wilderness warfare. He set out from Carlisle on July 18, 1763, with a force of about 500 soldiers, encumbered by a long train of supply wagons and packhorses, to make the grueling 200-mile march. It took a week to reach Fort Bedford and, by the time they reached Fort Ligonier on August 2, the Colonel became worried by the lack of news from Fort Pitt. To speed up his march, he left the wagons and most of his supplies at Ligonier when he resumed his advance August 4.

When the Indians learned of the expedition, they determined to repeat their successes against Braddock in 1755 and Grant in 1758. Leaving the vicinity of Fort Pitt, which they had been attacking for four days, the Indians went to ambush the advance guard of Bouquet's little army at one o'clock in the afternoon of August 5. Fierce fighting raged until nightfall, when the Colonel had his men strengthen their position on a hilltop by piling flour bags to encircle it and protect the wounded. The next day, August 6, the Indians came whooping and yelling around the "flour-bag fort," and made several bold assaults upon it. The situation appeared grim indeed, when Bouquet ordered his men to feign retreat and then, from one side, to



Col. Henry Bouquet

attack the Indians as they rushed upon the camp. The troops put the Indians to flight, pursuing them for two miles.

This two-day battle raised the siege of Fort Pitt and clearly demonstrated Bouquet's superior understanding of the methods of wilderness warfare. The following year, Bouquet's expedition into central Ohio overawed the Indians and brought peace.

In 1918, the school children of Westmoreland County donated their pennies to make possible the purchase of 61½ acres of the battlefield site by the Bushy Run Battlefield Memorial Association. The Bushy Run Battlefield Commission, established in 1927, made this the nucleus of the 162-acre State

park which was developed in co-operation with the Pennsylvania Department of Forests and Waters. In 1963, Bushy Run Battlefield was transferred to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and thus became a station on its *Pennsylvania Trail of History*.

On the hill where the "flour-bag fort" once stood, there is now a monument of Ligonier granite which bears bronze plaques reproducing Bouquet's letters about the battle, a description, and a map. The next hill to the west has a memorial marking the approximate site of the graves of fifty soldiers who lost their lives in the battle. Driveways and paths wind through the battlefield, and there are four picnic areas equipped with fireplaces and shelters. The small museum is intended to aid the visitor in understanding the great event which took place here on two sultry August days in 1763.

Visiting Hours

Visitors welcome any time before sunset.

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